A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

Grays-Inn Chappel

Novemb. the 26th 1691.

BEING

The Day of Thanksgiving,

For the Success of Their Majesties Forces, and Reducing of *IRELAND.*

By *GEORGE STANHOP,*
Vicar of *Lewisham* in *Kent.*

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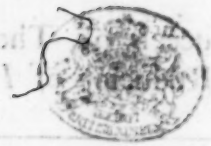

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ISAIAH xxvi. Ver. 4.

Truſt ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting Strength.

IN order to underſtand the true Meaning of this Chapter, it will be convenient to caſt our Eyes back, as far as the 24*th.* where, after having foretold a general Deſtruction and Deſolation in the Land, the Prophet comforts his People and himſelf with the eſcape of a Remnant; but that Remnant ſo few in compariſon, and in ſuch apparent danger of being ſwept away in the ſame common Ruin, that they are with great elegance repreſented, under

Ch. xxiv. ver. 13. the figures of *the ſhakings of an Olive Tree*, and *the gleaning Grapes when the Vintage is done.* And in regard this Deliverance was to be terrible to their Enemies, no leſs than wonderful in it ſelf, therefore *Iſaiah*, according to that loftineſs of ſtile, ſo peculiar to him, breaks forth into Songs of Joy and Triumph, ſuch as might at once both magnifie the Goodneſs of Almighty God, and make that people duly ſenſible how ſafe and happy they were under his gracious and powerful Protection.

And if ſome of the beſt Interpreters are not miſtaken in referring that Calamity to the Ten Tribes led Captive by *Salmaneſor*, and this marvellous Deliverance of God's People to the reſcue of *Jeruſalem* from *Sennacherib*'s Army; the potent Adverſary of this Kingdom, from whoſe Rage God hath in ſome meaſure delivered us already, and againſt whom we ſtill implore the continuance of his Defence; bears ſo near a reſemblance to that inſulting *Aſſyrian*, that the Application is moſt eaſie, and the Parallel naturally draws it ſelf. His graſping Ambition and haughty Cruelty, which are ſo well known to have render'd him a Terrour both at home and abroad, abundantly prove the fitneſs of this Hymn, being made a part of our Thankſgiving Service, and the neceſſity of my exhorting all that hear me to day, to a firm and devout Confidence in God. And therefore, *Though your Enemies be mighty, and they that hate you wrongfully are many in number*, yet ſtill, *Truſt ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting Strength.*

The Text plainly perſwades to a Duty, and backs that Perſwaſion with an Argument, drawn from the Power and Providence of Almighty God; for the enforcing whereof, I ſhall, *Firſt*, ſay ſomething to the Prophet's

phet's Arguments, and ſhew how ſecure a Ground of Dependence that Power and Providence of God is to us.

Secondly, What this Duty of *truſting in him for ever* implies. and when we may be ſaid truly to diſcharge it. And,

Thirdly, I ſhall bring theſe general Conſiderations home to our ſelves, and to the particular occaſion of this preſent Solemnity.

1.] *Firſt*, I am to ſpeak to the Prophet's Argument, and ſhew, how ſecure a Ground of Dependence the Power and Providence of God is to us. It requires but very moderate Reflection, and no extraordinary Depth of Thought to convince men, that the Succeſſes of their Undertakings, and Accompliſhment of their Hopes, are not perfectly in their own power: The vaſt and ſurprizing variety of Accidents that attend human Life, demonſtrates moſt ſenſibly to each particular perſon's experience, the truth of the Preacher's Obſervation, That *the Race is not alwaies to the ſwift, nor the Battel to the ſtrong*. And this teaches us, at the ſame time, the extream folly of depending upon our own Abilities, and moſt probable Endeavours, when we frequently ſee the events of things ſo little correſpondent to them. But though this perplexing Conſideration have driven ſome to impute all to the undiſtinguiſhing hits of blind Chance, becauſe of the great diſproportion between Mens Merits and their Fortunes; and though others have been carried into a very diſtant but altogether as unaccountable an Extreme, and bound up every thing in the Fetters of a neceſſary Fatality, yet we are to remember, theſe were ſuch as knew not Eccleſ. ix. 11.

God, nor had any juſt Apprehenſions of his wiſe and ſteddy Government of the World; and that we may and ought to poſſeſs our Souls in much more patience. We can take more effectual Methods, both for the conducting our Actions, and for ſatisfying our ſelves with the different Concluſions of them to us. We, I ſay, who have learned from the unerring Oracles of God, where our Confidence is to be placed, from whence we muſt expect the laſt Reſults of all, and, that what St. *Paul* has told us in another caſe, is true alſo in this; That *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth Mercy.*

Rom. ix. 16.

And, after we have brought our ſelves to this general acknowledgment of God's over-ruling Providence, there are ſeveral Attributes in his Nature, which may ſtrongly move us to take off our Confidence from all other, though never ſo promiſing Objects, and place it entirely in that alone. Such, for inſtance, is his Goodneſs, which ever inclines him to grant what is moſt advantageous, and *make all things work together, for the benefit of them that love him.* Such his Wiſdom, whereby he defeats all the moſt politick Contrivances of Men, and manifeſts to the whole World, how vain and inconſiſtent, how thin and ſlight, how like the wild ſick Dreams of Feaveriſh men, all their fond Imaginations are; and ſuch his Power, which, in deſpight of any oppoſition to the contrary, effects the whole good Counſel of his Will, and performs all his Pleaſure. Of this laſt more eſpecially the Text takes notice, and has recommended it, from the Greatneſs

Rom. viii. 28.

and

and the Eternity of it. *In the Lord Jehovah is ſtrength*, and that *ſtrength* is *everlaſting*.

What this Strength is originally, and in it ſelf, we cannot comprehend, but that it is inherent and eſſential to the Nature of God, the Prophet hints, by mentioning him under the Appellation of *Jehovah*; which, above all other his Titles, doth moſt ſignificantly ſet forth the Glory of His Majeſty, and the unchangeable Conſtancy of thoſe Perfections we aſcribe to him. The external Operations then of this Strength, are the moſt powerful Inducements to rely upon it: And though, even of theſe too, a great part is a Secret to us; nor can we purſue Providence through all the Labyrinths of its dark and wonderful Diſpenſations towards Mankind, yet is there ſo much of it viſible and evident, as moſt juſtly commands our obſervation, and is proper to fix our Confidence; as particularly in theſe three Inſtances that follow.

1.] *Firſt*, The gracious Concurrence of Almighty God with Second Cauſes, and his enabling them to produce their uſual effects.

2.] *Secondly*, His more wonderful tranſcending or ſuperſeding thoſe Cauſes, ſo as upon ſome occaſions, either to make them act beſide their Natural Power and Order, or to produce ſuch things without them, to which, according to the common courſe of the World, they are neceſſarily required.

3.]

3.] *Thirdly*, The occaſion of his exerting theſe Powers in ſuch a manner, which is generally, for the ſake of all, or part of Mankind.

1.] The firſt Evidence of this Power, is his gracious Concurrence with Second Cauſes, and enabling them to produce their uſual Effects. In all Employments and Deſigns of Life, particular means and inſtruments are choſen for particular and diſtinct purpoſes, and every thing will no more ſerve for every uſe, than every Sence can perceive every Object. He that would expect Moiſture out of Iron, or Heat out of Ice; and he that hopes to hear with his Eyes, and to ſee with his Ears, were equally ridiculous. Now, the beſtowing theſe ſeveral Diſpoſitions upon things, the determining them at firſt to their ſeveral Faculties, and limitting their Powers to ſuch peculiar uſes, rather than others, is manifeſtly the wiſe diſpoſal of a Superiour Mind. And after that theſe Diſpoſitions are thus beſtowed and reſtrained, yet ſtill his Concurrence is neceſſary, to bring theſe Abilities he has given to a good effect: For, even the moſt proper and likely means do ſometimes fail of compaſſing their ends, which they could never do, if they had an abſolute Sufficiency in themſelves, and did not depend upon ſome Higher Being for Perfection and Succeſs. As therefore the Ax is fitted for cutting, but yet can only do it in ſuch a place, and at ſuch a time, and to ſuch a degree as the Hand of the Artificer directs; ſo are theſe lower Cauſes, which this World contains, no more in truth, than ſo many Aptneſſes and Tendencies, able to perform only

ly ſuch things, and in ſuch proportions, as the Great Maker and Mover of all is pleas'd to give Leave and Aſſiſtance. If He but hold his Hand, the whole Engine ſtands ſtill; if He withdraw the Powers derived from him, then the Work is not only interrupted, but all the Fabrick falls to pieces. The ſwiftneſs of *Pharaoh*'s Chariots could do him no Service when the Lord clogg'd the Wheels with new weight, and made them drive heavily: And all Creatures attend ſo entirely upon his Pleaſure, that, as the Pſalmiſt obſerves very well, *He need only hide his Face, and they are troubled; when he taketh away their Breath they dye, and are turned again to their* primitive *Duſt*. Of ſuch abſolute Neceſſity is the Almighty's continual Concurrence, and ſo clear an Evidence of his Strength it is, even when the moſt ordinary things are effected by even the moſt ordinary means.

Exod. xiv. 25.

Pſal. civ. 29.

2.] But, becauſe our Obſervation is wont to reſt too ſoon, and purſue things no farther than the loweſt Cauſes and moſt immediate Inſtruments, by which our Senſes ſhew them perfected to us; and becauſe, according to the common method of Nature, effects are uſually, though not alwaies the ſame when the ſame courſe is taken to bring them about: Therefore *Almighty God* does ſometimes awaken mens Minds by the more ſenſible Tokens of his Preſence, and extort an acknowledgment of his Providence by ſome more wonderful and ſurpriſing Inſtances. Theſe are ſuch as my ſecond particular mentions, when he either tranſcends, or wholly ſuperſedes theſe next Cauſes. The former is done when

when he makes them act beſide their Natural Power and Order; the latter, when he produces ſuch things without them, as they are neceſſarily required to the production of, according to the ſettled courſe of the World.

Sometimes we find him tranſcending theſe Cauſes, by ſtretching their Efficacy farther than Nature and Uſe have done; as, when a Barrel of Meal, and a Cruiſe of Oyl, ſuſtained ſeveral perſons for a good while without waſting; when five Barly Loaves and two ſmall Fiſhes ſatisfied five thouſand people; when a raw unarmed Youth, as *David*, ſlew an experienc'd mighty Champion, *Goliah* the Great, infinitely his Superiour in ſtrength and all the advantages of War; when *Jonathan* and his *Armour-bearer* attack'd the Garriſon at *Mickmaſh*, and a whole Army of *Philiſtines* were put into diſorder by two men. In all theſe caſes Nature outdid her ſelf, and the Event was very much above what we commonly find it, or what *Prudence* and a well-weigh'd Judgment can fairly promiſe from any human means. Upon other occaſions he puts a Reſtraint upon Nature, and ſets a Bar to its Diſpoſitions and Faculties; as, in ſhutting up the Lions mouths, and taming that Hunger and Native Rage to *Daniel*; which when this miraculous Confinement was taken off again, returned with all its ravening force upon his *Accuſers*. And that yet more amazing preſervation of the Three Children in the Furnace, upon whom not ſo much as the ſmell of Fire had paſſed, tho' the perſons that bound and caſt them in, *periſhed* at a diſtance, with the Extremity of its Heat.

1 Kings, xvii, 11. &c.

Joh. vi. 5, &c.

1 Sam. xvii.

1 Sam. xiv.

Dan. vi.

Dan. iii.

Again,

Again, as Nature is ſometimes thus disjointed and put out of courſe, ſo is it at others wholly laid aſide: And this happens either when God produces things without any contribution of Second Cauſes; as, when *he rained Manna* upon the *Iſraelitiſh* Camp, and *feathered Fowls as the Sand of the Sea*; when he impower'd *the dumb Aſs with Man's voice, to rebuke the madneſs of the Prophet*; and when he ſuſtained *Moſes* forty days and forty nights, without eating or drinking in the Mount: Or, which ſeems ſtill to be a greater Violence, when he makes thoſe Cauſes ſubſervient to quite contrary Effects; as, in gathering the Waters of the Red-Sea together, and fixing them like Walls and Rocks at one time, and at another, cleaving the hard Rock, and melting it down, ſo that the *Waters guſhed out, and Rivers flowed in the dry places.* Theſe, and infinite other Examples the Scriptures furniſh us with, wherein the *Lord Jehovah* ſhewed his *everlaſting Strength*; which will appear to be moſt fitly laid by the Prophet here, as a ſure Foundation for our Truſt in him, if we proceed to conſider,

Exod. xvi. Numb. xi. Pſal. lxxviii. Ver. 25, 28. Numb. xxii. Exod. xxxiv. 28. Exod. xiv. xvii.

3.] *Thirdly*, That that which gives occaſion for the exerting this Duty, is generally the Benefit of all, or part of Mankind. We cannot think at all, and at the ſame time continue inſenſible, what a cheriſhing and conſtant Care is taken of the whole World, and how liberally our indulgent Creator extends his Mercy over all his Works. Now both our Saviour and his Apoſtle have given us Authority to improve this Conſideration to our own comfort and very great advantage: That if God

Mat. vi. 26, 30. 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10. *cloth the Graſs of the Field, and feed the Fowls of the Air, and take care for Oxen, he does it for our ſakes.* That he cannot in reaſon be ſuppoſed to neglect a Creature that wears his own Image, and conſequently of much more excellence and value with him than they: So that Men ſeem to have the firſt Title to his Affections; they are juſtified in expectations of a peculiar Tenderneſs and moſt immediate Protection: And every unworthy Diſtruſt of this is often reproved in the Goſpel, as arguing either great Ignorance or little Faith in them.

But even among Men we may diſcern ſome difference made; for, though His Concern deſcend to all, even the moſt minute circumſtances of Human Life, and the *very Hairs of our Head are all* Mat. x. 30. *numbred before him*, yet where we meet with a perſon of extraordinary Piety and Worth, or ſuch a one as he has choſen, and mark'd out for an Inſtrument of doing ſome Great Work, and manifeſting his Power to the World, there it is eaſie to obſerve, how Providence charges it ſelf after a more ſignal manner with that perſons's Preſer- 1 Kin. xvii. vation and Succeſs. Such was the feeding *Elijah* by Ravens, and hiding him with his own hand in 1 Sam. xix. xx, &c. the hollow of a Rock; ſuch the frequent Reſcues of *David*, from the Malice of that blood-thirſty Tyrant, that hunted him like a Partridge upon 2 Sam. ii. the Mountains; and at laſt the exaltation of him to the Throne of his unnatural Enemy; and ſuch the Judg. xv. 19. Refreſhment of *Sampſon*, when juſt expiring with Thirſt,

Thirſt, by turning the Jaw-bone of an Aſs into a ſpringing Well.

Yet after all this, it muſt be acknowledged, that as the dignity and conſequence of the Occaſion does beſt juſtifie ſuch Miracles of Mercy, ſo the care and kindneſs of our God is then moſt eminent and illuſtrious, when employed in the protection of whole States, and Religious Kingdoms, People that have undertaken the profeſſion of the Truth, and devoted themſelves to his Service. What a continued Chain of Wonders do we read in all his dealings with the Children of *Iſrael*? in forming them at firſt into a Nation; in redeeming them from their Bondage; in ſuſtaining them in the Wilderneſs, in the midſt of Scarcity and Drought, of Serpents and Scorpions; in diſpoſſeſſing the *Canaanites*, and ſubduing their foreign Invaders; and when their incorrigible Offences and inflexible Hardneſs of Heart provoked his Juſtice, then, by an aſtoniſhing mixture of Kindneſs and Severity, at once preſerving his People, and puniſhing their Perverſeneſs. No Hiſtory in the World could ever furniſh out ſuch memorable Inſtances of God's tender Regard; and yet, every *Chriſtian Country* is as truly his Darling and Peculiar as they were; every ſuch Community is as deeply intereſted in his Favour, except, like them too, they obſtruct the Current of his Grace, and forfeit their own Advantages.

The Sum of my firſt Head is briefly this: That Almighty God, like a wiſe Ruler, hath fixed a Law and regular Method in Nature, yet in ſuch a manner, that nothing ſhould be perfectly independent, but the very Succeſs of common and probable means ſhould be ſtill owing to his Bleſſing and gracious Permiſſion, and the Divine Power ſhew it ſelf eminently, even in this point; That there are beſides and above theſe Rules, ſome ſpecial and reſerved Caſes, which appeal from, and are Exceptions to them, and that for the more awakening and conſpicuous Demonſtrations of his Power, upon ſolemn and emergent occaſions: To which, when we have added one Reflection more, *viz.* That the Good of all or ſome part of Mankind is generally the occaſion which calls forth this Power into exerciſe; nothing can be wanting to eſtabliſh our Hearts by a ſtedfaſt Truſt in God.

Which Duty, what it imports, after all that has been already ſaid, will very eaſily appear, and that by three Particulars, with reſpect to each of the three former Conſiderations.

1.] As, firſt, the Concurrence of God's Power with ordinary Cauſes, implies, that, as a Teſtimony of our Truſt in him, we ſhould make uſe of proper and pertinent means, and that this be done with Diligence and Submiſſion to his wiſer diſpoſal of us and our Affairs.

1.] With

1.] With Diligence, becauſe theſe inferiour Helps are the Inſtruments he uſually works by, and hath promiſed to proſper Mens Undertakings in proportion to them. For, though the *Race* be not alwaies, yet is uſually *to the Swift*, and *the Battel* for the moſt part *to the Strong*; and he that ſhould aſſault an Enemy without any Regard had to the Strength and Number, the Conduct and Counſel on either ſide, deſerves to ſtand in Hiſtory a laſting Monument of Infamy and Reproach, for Folly and Irreligion. *To caſt all our care upon God*, in this ſence is not Confidence, but Preſumption; and thoſe who have the vanity to expect he ſhould break the Scheme of his Government, and do things out of the common Road of Nature, meerly to patronize their Sloth or Enthuſiaſtick Madneſs; that plunge themſelves in apparent and unneceſſary Difficulties, in hopes that, when they are entangled in the Snare, an Almighty Hand ſhould come down in Thunder and cut it, and ſet them free; theſe men do not truſt in God, but tempt him. David, 'tis true, hath taught us, That *no King can be ſaved by the multitude of an Hoſt*, if the LORD of Hoſts think fit to interpoſe and diſappoint him; but yet a greater than *David* condemns the Imprudence of that King, who being to wage War, does not firſt ſit down and conſult, whether he be able with Ten thouſand to meet him that cometh againſt him with Twenty thouſand; or elſe, if he find himſelf hard preſſed, does not ſend and ſollicite a Treaty of Peace, rather

Pſal. xxxiii. 15

Luk. xiv. 31, 32.

rather than hazard his own and his Peoples Safety upon unequal and diſadvantageous Terms.

But to this prudent Care we muſt add Submiſſion too; for, if the want of our own Diligence be an abuſe of God's Power, the reſting entirely upon that Diligence is a diſowning of it. This tends directly to the ſhutting out Providence from any Right or Intereſt in human Affairs, and ſtrikes at the very Root and Bottom of all Religion. This is a ſort of Idolatry to our ſelves, for which reaſon the Prophet calls it very elegantly, *ſacrificing to mens own Net, and burning Incenſe to their own Drag:* For, nothing is more certain than this; That if there were no Superintendency of an Higher Being, to aſſiſt or oppoſe, to crown or to defeat our Endeavours, all Devotion and Prayer for temporal Bleſſings, all Thanks and Praiſe, (and this days Aſſembly, to be ſure, in a particular manner) would be not only an unneceſſary Trouble, but the idleſt and rudeſt Mockery of God, the moſt ſenſleſs Hypocriſie, and ridiculous piece of Pageantry in the whole World. When we have therefore done all within the power of Counſel and Strength, ſtill this is but preparing our buſineſs for Perfection. Ours is the rough Draught, but the finiſhing ſtrokes muſt be received from another Hand: And, except He ratifie all with his Royal Aſſent and Confirmation, our moſt auſpicious Beginnings are as if nothing had ever been begun at all. This then is the ſhort but true ſtate of our Condition: If any Failings on our part hinder the Succeſs,

Habak. i. 16.

ceſs, we have been our own Defeaters; if our Wiſhes and Attempts have found a fortunate Concluſion, this is the Grace of ours and the Worlds Governour; if our Deſires and Endeavours prove abortive, and Dangers at any time grow upon us, and all this too, notwithſtanding the diſcharge of a ſincere Conſcience and prudent Application, the next ſtep of our Duty is, a free and humble reſignation of our Perſons and Intereſts, into the Hands of our merciful Creator.

2.] And this makes way for a ſecond Argument of our Truſt in God, that as *his Strength is everlaſting*, ſo our Truſt ſhould be for ever too: For, from the Conſideration, That he can tranſcend or ſuperſede all ſecond or common Cauſes, we are obliged not to caſt away our Confidence in him, no, not though all human and probable Proſpects ſhould have forſaken us. Thus we find *Hezekiah* upon his Knees, in the Diſtreſs to which this Propheey is ſuppoſed to referr, inflaming his Zeal with the greatneſs of the Danger, and his utter Inability to diſingage himſelf from it: He laments it as *a day of Trouble, and Rebuke, and Blaſphemy*, and compares his condition to the pangs of a Woman in Travail, *when the Children are come to the Birth, and there is not ſtrength to bring forth*: And then is the proper Seaſon for the Divine Power to glorifie it ſelf; then the Mercy is enlarged to them that confeſs its kindly Influences, and its Honour beſt aſſerted to thoſe who prophane and deny them, when the Impotence of Human Methods has made us ripe for Miracles, and no In- Ch. xxxvii.

Interpoſition leſs than Divine can retrieve us: And accordingly the Anſwer of *Iſaiah* preſents us with a lively and beautiful Image of God's over-ruling and invincible Strength; for, though this inſulting Tyrant might flounce and kick, like a wild Bull in a Net, or an untamed Horſe, yet
V. 29. *God would put his Hook in his Noſe, and his Bridle in his Lips*; would break and manage this headſtrong rebellious Beaſt, and like a skilful Rider, turn him his own way, *i. e.* command him immediately home again. And certainly he, who rather than deſert his Servants, is uſed to engage the very Elements on their ſide, that ſlew multitudes with
Joſh. x. Judg. v. a Storm of Hailſtones, and marſhall'd the Stars in their courſes to fight againſt *Siſera*; can never want Methods, though to us unknown, to reſcue his People from their Calamities. Whether it be by turning their Enemy's Counſels into Fooliſh-
2 Sam. xvii 14. Ch. xxxvii. 36. 2 Kin. vii, 6. neſs, as he did *Achitophel's*, or by blowing up Diſſentions among themſelves, as between the Three Kings combined againſt *Jehoſhaphat*; or by confounding them with a ſudden panick Fear, as he did the Hoſt of the *Syrians*; or by giving them ſome Diverſion; or by a ſwift Meſſenger of Vengeance and Slaughter; as in this very Caſe, when the *Aſſyrian* haſting to preſerve his own
2 Chron. xx. 23. Country againſt *Annoyances* from a Neighbouring Prince, left Fourſcore and Five thouſand of his Army behind him, ſlain by an *unſeen Hand*. Theſe, and many other the like Inſtances, will condemn all mean Thoughts and unworthy Diſtruſts of *God's Everlaſting Strength*, all the Meaſurings of his Mighty Arm by our own weak

Arm

Arm of Fleſh; for, then it is that our Hearts ſpeak noble and becoming Apprehenſions concerning him; when, *though our Enemies are daily in hand to ſwallow us up*, and *many continually fighting and troubling us*, yet *we are not diſmayed at what Man can do unto us.* And though Fleſh and Blood will recoil, and *we be ſometimes afraid*, yet may we conquer all the Surprizes and Amazements of frail Nature, and buoy up our ſinking Souls with this ſingle but moſt powerful Reflection; That *if God be for us*, it ſignifies little, but very little, who can be againſt us.

3.) *Thirdly*, From God's exerting his Power for the Good of Mankind, and among them diſtinguiſhing between his faithful Servants and the reſt of the World, we may plainly perceive, that the Duty of truſting in God implies a Care to lead ſuch Lives, as may fit us for his Mercy, and recommend us to his more peculiar Favour and Protection. The diſtribution of Worldly Bleſſings is not ſo confined to good and holy men, as that Proſperity ſhould be a mark of Piety; very far from that, God knows: But yet theſe Happineſſes are much more reaſonably expected, and may be more ſecurely depended upon, by ſuch as ſtudy to pleaſe God, than thoſe that make it their conſtant buſineſs to provoke and affront him. However, the publick Peace and Safety will hardly fail a Nation truly zealous in the Promotion and Practice of Religion, becauſe theſe Societies being diſſolved and loſt hereafter, there can be

no common Reward then for men conſidered in their publick Capacities. And this makes a very remarkable difference between the Fortunes of Kingdoms and thoſe of private perſons. In one of theſe Caſes there is a very fair account to be given of that promiſcuous Providence, ſo obſervable in the World, becauſe we know there is ſtill a future Judgment in reſerve, and God can make any ſingle man ample amends in another World, for any the ſevereſt Tribulations in this: But, there are no politick Bodies of Men in the other World, and therefore there ſeems to be a Neceſſity that ſuch Communities ſhould receive their Recompence at preſent, becauſe otherwiſe they can never be in a condition of receiving any Recompence at all. I add too, That this Reflection, by the ſame reaſon, muſt needs prove the Neceſſity of ſuch Societies being puniſhed in this World, and, by conſequence, the abominable Impiety and Prophaneneſs of imploring National Bleſſings, without ſerious Reſolution and ſtrict Endeavours of better Obedience. In this caſe it is not meerly a Perſwaſion of God's Power, though never ſo ſtrong and ſanguine, but it is a Conſcientious Care to engage that Power on our ſide, that is truſting in him. Elſe we may lament our Diſtreſſes to no purpoſe, ſo long as that Reproach lies againſt us, in the 59th. of this Propheey, at the firſt and ſecond Verſes. *Behold, the Lord's Hand is not ſhortened, that it cannot ſave; nor his Ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your Iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God,*

and

and your ſins have hid his Face from you, that he will not hear.

Thus I have done with the Text in its comprehenſive Sence, and as propounding a general Duty with the Ground of it; I beg Leave now only to bring theſe Conſiderations home to our own Caſe, and ſo conclude.

1.] And, *Firſt*, For the Almighty's favourable Concurrence with Human Means and Second Cauſes, we all ſtand here as ſo many living Monuments of Joy, for his Power and Goodneſs in it. And ſure it were too vile, too impious an Indignity to the juſt Honours of this Day and Place, not to commemorate with a moſt ſenſible and fervent Gratitude, thoſe Mercies, to which we owe the very opportunities of addreſſing our Thanks to GOD in this religious manner; for, not only our Liberties and Civil Rights, but, in all human proſpect, our very Lives too, and which to every good man is infinitely dearer than both, the Purity of our Faith and Worſhip, have been preſerved to us by theſe Succeſſes. What words then ſhall we find expreſſive enough of the Acknowledgments due to our Gracious GOD, for all thoſe proſperous Events, which either our own Strength and Policy, the Courage and Conduct of our Defenders and Allies, or the Cowardice, Cruelty, Imprudence, or Misfortunes of our Enemies, have been the Inſtruments of to us? For, even theſe are His, and could avail us nothing, till he

was pleaſed to perfect and form them into Bleſſings. But eſpecially, What Incenſe, what Sacrifice of Praiſe can be too much for his reſerving to us, and to our Age, an Age that ſo much needed him, a Prince of that indefatigable and genereus Valour? For, inſpiring his Royal Breaſt with a vigorous and active Fire, not ſuch as waſts away inglorioufly, in the ſoft Delights and Luxuries of Courts, or is kindled by devouring Avarice, and preys upon all about it; but which exerciſes it ſelf in Arms and Dangers, for a Check to mighty Oppreſſors, and the ſeaſonable Relief of Diſtreſſed Mankind. And more particularly yet, while he deſpis'd his own for the ſake of our common Safety, for the watchful Care, and many eminent Preſervations of that Royal, that moſt Important Life, by the ſingle Thread of which the preſent Happineſs and future Hopes, I ſay not of theſe Kingdoms, but of all this *Weſtern World*, ſeem at this juncture to hang. Thus far we have taſted the Bounties of an Indulgent Providence already, a foretaſte, I hope, of many more and greater; for into more and greater we may and muſt endeavour to improve them. And if this be not done by a cheerful Fidelity and unanimous Diligence, an humble Submiſſion to, and a becoming Entertainment of the Divine Diſpenſations toward us, our Blood muſt lye upon our own Heads; and all our future Fears and future Miſeries may be juſtly eſteemed no longer our Fate, but our fooliſh and perverſe Choice: For, Whence ſhall we fetch Arguments ſtrong enough to ſmooth the

rough-

roughneſs of our Minds at home, and cement us cloſe in Peace and mutual Affection to one another, if the univerſal Apprehenſions of the ſame formidable Common Enemy will not do it, and the being engag'd for the ſame publick Cauſe abroad, in which, as in one common center, all our moſt diſtant Opinions and divided Intereſts are united and concern'd? Or, What can quicken our Diligence, and confirm our Reſolution, if the bright Example of a Royal Leader, ſo unuſually laviſh of Toyl and Blood, will not awaken the old *Engliſh* Gallantry, and warm our frozen Zeal, and provoke us to a decent imitation? But, above all, How ſhall we anſwer to God and our own Conſciences thoſe deſponding Murmures and unreaſonable Complaints, which are more than whiſper'd in our Streets? We deal with Providence like greedy inſatiable Traders, who compute their Advantages only by clear Gains, and never allow the Goods that are ſaved to them any place at all in the Account. For, Is it (I am ſure it ought not to be) a ſmall thing with us, that we have ſeen ſafe, when almoſt deſpaired, arrivals of rich Cargoes from abroad; that the Clouds, which ſo often were gathering in our ſight, have not broken upon our Heads; that we are not reduced to the laſt ſhifts of Poverty and Exile, nor ask our Food and Raiment in a ſtrange Land; but, while other Countries have been the Unhappy Scenes of Violence and Confuſion, Ours, whoſe Intereſt is yet equal in the Quarrel, continues calm and compoſed, a peace-

peaceful Habitation for Natives, and a Sanctuary and ſure Retreat for afflicted Strangers? Bleſſed therefore be that good Providence, by which we only hear and read thoſe diſtant Tragedies that others languiſh and dye under. And much too coldly are they heard and read, if we have not the Grace to grow thankful by the Compariſon. Bleſſed be his Name, that we have lived to ſee the *Britiſh* Monarchy once more balancing Kingdomes, reſtraining exorbitant Power and Oppreſſion, giving Life to a noble, numerous, and moſt juſt Confederacy, putting a ſtop to proud triumphant Armies, full of Blood and Conqueſt, and ſtemming the Torrent of that ſtill-growing Ambition, which elſe would bear down and ſwallow all before it. Theſe are ſomething more than the Beginnings of Victory and Happineſs; and if ſuch conſiderations cannot prevail with Men, not to be peeviſh, and diſſatisfied at leaſt, it is from a narrow Spirit of private Diſcontent, or becauſe they want Bowels for their Brethren's Calamities, and have too faint a ſenſe of the near approaches of their own. If Loſſes and Diſappointments have been ſometimes mingled with ſuch ſignal Preſervations, this is but a human and very ordinary thing, agreeable to the Condition of War, in which there are ſo many Contingencies, ſo many ſeeming-little Accidents, which yet draw vaſt Conſequences after them, that a clear and uninterrupted Conqueſt cannot in reaſon ever be expected; but agreeable eſpecially to the Juſtice of GOD, who often deals thus with Men; and

(as

(as he impoſed upon the murmuring *Iſraelites* a Forty Years ſojourning in the Wilderneſs) to makes the croſſing of our Expectations, and the delay of future Mercies a puniſhment for being ungrateful, and inſenſibly of the preſent ones.

2.] *Secondly*, As the Succeſſes received by ordinary means, call for our Thanks, ſo our very Difficulties and Diſaſters, were they infinitely blacker, and more ghaſtly than even Diſcontent can paint them, would not juſtifie any repining Diſtruſt of God's Strength and Providence; becauſe we obſerv'd before, that he does not bind himſelf up to the common Laws of Nature, nor alwaies reſt in uſual means, but hath left a Power of diſpenſing with thoſe Laws at pleaſure, and acting by methods ſuperior to them. This I have ſhewed he often does upon ſolemn and urgent occaſions, when the Neceſſities of his Servants, or the Provocations of his Enemies, are grown above all common Remedies, and require a miraculous Redreſs. And truly, if we compare the preſent ſtate of Affairs with ſome Inſtances, in which he hath formerly thought his Honour concern'd, many circumſtances ſeem to call aloud for his particular and more immediate Vindication: For, if the Sighs and Tears of Widows and Fatherleſs, and the Cry of the Blood of Innocents have not loſt their ancient Faculty of piercing the Clouds; if Cities laid in Aſhes, whole Country's depopulated; if Oppreſſion and Sacriledge, Broken Faith with Subjects, and Leagues with Infidels,

fidels, to assist in the Destruction of Christians; if these be as much the God of Justice and Pity's Care now, as he once declared them to be; again, if the Martyrdome and Flight of some, whose only Crime was a stedfast Belief of the Truth, and a just Abhorrence of Idolatry and Superstition, and the dissembled Retractations of others, extorted by Violence and Human Frailty, be not negligently overlook'd by that tender Saviour, who suffers in his afflicted Members, hungers and thirsts in their Wants, is cold in all their Nakedness, bleeds in all their Wounds, and is oppressed in all their Persecutions: Lastly, If extravagant Insolence, and blasphemous Pride, even Medals and Statues, with Inscriptions peculiar to GOD alone, can awake the Jealousie of Heaven, we may, without incurring the imputation of Enthusiasm, expect that the Divine Judgment will not alwaies linger, but in some eminent manner discharge it self, upon this bold Defier of GOD, this Christian, and for that reason, the blacker and more provoking *Sennacherib* of the two.

These are, in plain terms, the due Praises of that Glorious, that Invincible Monarch; these the Noble Topicks, that have exhausted all the nauseous Flatteries of so many mercenary Tongues and Pens: As if they would fain make us believe, that Christianity and Human Nature have both forgot themselves, and neither now know any Quality so Great and Godlike as that of being

ing a Terrour to Subjects and Neighbours, and a mighty Murderer of Mankind. It is with a very ill Grace that these barbarous Excellencies are Deified, since the gentle and peaceable Doctrine of JESUS was sent abroad to reform and compose the World. Nor could such Glories ever be proper Ornaments in a Prince's Character, since those dark and wretched days of Superstitious Ignoranee and Slavish Fear, when Men burnt Incense to that *roaring Lion, who goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour.*

3.] These Reflections are but too just upon our Adversary; but alas! while we indulge them, do not our own grievous Offences give us check, and will hardly suffer us to believe, that Vengeance, though fit to be taken, is yet likely to be taken for our sakes: And therefore, unless, according to my Third Observation, we fix Almighty GOD in our Interests, by sincere amendment of Life, all other Encouragements will prove at last no better than imaginary Delusions; *He scatters the proud* indeed, and *puts down the mighty*, but it is, *that he may exalt the humble and meek*, those that, as the Prophet says here, *wait for him in the way of his Judgments*; that is, receive all his Providences with a pious and becoming Temper of Mind, and make the true and best improvements of them. When our Behaviour has distinguish'd us first, then there is a good Hope that his Mercy will do so too: For, the wise *Ammonite*'s Advice to *Holofernes* is very re- Luk. I. 51, 52 V. 8.

markable to this purpoſe; (*Judith, v.* 20, 21.) *Now therefore, my Lord and Governour, if there be any Errour in this People, and they ſin againſt their God, let us conſider, that this ſhall be their ruin, and let us go up, and we ſhall overcome them: And if there be no Iniquity in their Nation, let my Lord now paſs by, leſt their Lord defend them, and their God be for them, and we become a reproach before all the World.*

Thus the Sins of a Kingdom enfeeble and expoſe it; theſe give an Edge to their Enemies Swords, and deal more certain Deaths than Fire and Gunpowder; but Innocence fences a People in, and renders them invincible. This then is the true method of loving our Country, and preſerving the common Safety, by juſt and holy Converſations to prevent and remove our greateſt and moſt fatal Danger, to become, even at home, a ſecret Shelter and impregnable Bulwark to thoſe Fleets and Armies that are our Defence abroad: For, without Repentance and Virtue, to help forward the Succeſs, their Strength is vain, and our Faſtings and Thankſgivings are alſo vain: But if Reformation be our ſerious Care, then they may have boldneſs in the day of Battel, and we at the Throne of Grace, to which Throne we are all, I hope, now come full of this holy Reſolution, and therefore let us approach with that pleaſing importunity recommended in the ſecond Leſſon for this day; and may the God of Heaven mercifully incline his Ear to our Prayers.

Luke xviii.

May

May *whatever Evils the craft and* malice *of the Devil or Man worketh againſt us be ſcattered and brought to nought*; may the Almighty ſtill immure the King's Perſon with a Guard of Angels, and continue him a ſucceſsful Inſtrument of his wiſe and gracious purpoſes; may theſe joyful Solemnities of Thanks and Triumph for his and our Deliverances, make frequent returns upon us; and may he daily erect new Trophies in the Hearts of his Subjects, till all the glad Preſages of our Souls be fully confirmed and accompliſh'd, till *Peace and Happineſs, Truth and Juſtice, Religion and Piety, be eſtabliſh'd among us for all Generations.* And let all the People ſay, *Amen.*

FINIS.

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